Claire Hilsinger 9/10/10

Baking has been a hobby of mine for a few years now. I love being able to turn a bunch of different ingredients into a delicious batch of cookies or a cake. Baked goods make a room warmer and people happier. I love the joy that baking brings to other people. I really enjoy baking around the Holidays, because baking and decorating sugar cookies is so festive and fun. Baking takes a lot of patience and discipline. Baking is not like cooking where you can change the recipe and add different ingredients. When you bake you must follow the recipe word for word or it will not turn out right.

When I was 10 years old, I started taking baking classes around the holidays in a cooking studio at the grocery store near my home. By the time I went to high school, I could not wait to take home economics with Ms. Mills and Ms. Ellis. It was in their classes where I learned baking vocabulary, such as garnish and pipe. I also learned how to use different tools and equipment, including those heavy duty mixers for large amounts of ingredients for batches of cookies. During the semester we went through about fifty recipes and each week the recipes grew more and more advanced. I also took a cake decorating class at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY, where I learned how to use fondant and make roses out of frosting. My practice paid off the summer between my sophomore and junior years of high school when I was hired to work as a baker’s assistant in a small bakery on Martha’s Vineyard called Cakes by Liz. I washed a lot of dishes, cracked dozens of eggs, and iced more cakes than I could count.

There are two things that first got me interested in baking. One was watching different television shows on the cooking channel like *Ultimate Cake Off*. I loved watching them turn ordinary cakes into amazing works of art. Another major influence was my grandmother. She was a high school home economics teacher and a great cook. When I was little we would bake and decorate cookies together all the time. I love baking so much is because it reminds me of her and when I bake I feel closer to her.

Most of what I learned about baking I learned in my home economic classes. I would not have made it very far if I had not taken those classes. My teachers Ms. Ellis and Ms. Mills were wonderful. They were extremely helpful and patient with all of us. They always encouraged us to try baking things that were out of our comfort level. Ms. Mills was also the one who wrote my recommendation letter that got me my job at *Cakes by Liz*. I honestly could not have done any of it without her.

Baking is something that I will always be able to do and I can only improve. It was a long time before I could bake anything worth mentioning, but now I usually make the desserts for all special occasions. My school played a major part in my baking education. Without those two home economics classes I never would have come as far as I have. Baking will always be a big part of my life.